

House Report No. 106-283

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

The Committee recommendation provides \$141,000,000 for the Legal Services Corporation (the Corporation) for fiscal year 2000. This amount is a decrease of \$199,000,000 below the request, and \$159,000,000 below the amount provided in fiscal year 1999. This amount includes: (1) \$134,575,000 for grants to basic field programs; (2) \$5,300,000 for management and administration to administer these grants on a competitive basis; and (3) \$1,125,000 for the Office of Inspector General for oversight of the Corporation and its grantees. The Committee notes that \$28,000,000 is provided for civil legal assistance under the Violence Against Women Act program funded under title I of this bill, an increase of \$5,000,000 over fiscal year 1999.

The Committee has serious concerns about the case service reporting and associated data reports submitted annually by the Corporation's grantees and the case statistical reports submitted by the Corporation to the Congress. The Committee is aware of substantial inaccuracies in these submissions, as documented by the Corporation's Office of Inspector General and the General Accounting Office, and directs the Corporation to make improvement of the accuracy of these submissions a top priority. To further that goal, the Committee directs the Corporation to provide further guidance on the definition of 'case', as that term is to be used in the case service reports. Specific differentiation should be made between the number of cases disposed of by activities such as telephone referrals to private attorneys and those disposed of by entry of settlement agreement or court judgment.

Additionally, in order to provide the Committee with the information necessary to consider the Corporation's budget for fiscal year 2001, the Corporation is directed to submit its 1999 annual case service reports and associated data reports to the Congress no later than April 30, 2000. The Office of Inspector General will assess the case service information provided by the grantees, and will report to the Committee no later than July 30, 2000, as to its accuracy. The Committee understands that time constraints will require the Office of Inspector General to use abbreviated evaluation techniques. The Committee directs the Corporation to submit an assessment of (1) the feasibility of providing separate accountings for Federally-funded cases, and (2) the feasibility of requiring grantees to submit case services reports on the Federal fiscal year basis, no later than June 1, 2000. The

Committee strongly urges the Corporation to take the steps necessary to ensure that the Corporation's annual case service reports will be provided to the Committee, and verified as accurate, by May 1 of each following fiscal year.

The Committee is aware that the Corporation has convened a special panel for the purpose of studying and reporting upon the statutory requirement that aliens be `present in the United States' as a condition of eligibility to receive Federally-funded legal assistance from the Corporation and its grantees, and directs the Corporation to keep the Committee fully informed on this issue.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION--LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

The Committee recommendation includes bill language to continue all statutory requirements and restrictions contained in the fiscal year 1999 Appropriations Act, as requested.